

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 19737 022053Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0929
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AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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E.O. LL652: N/A
TAGS: UK IS EG XF
SUBJECT: FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN ON THE MIDDLE EAST

L. FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN WAS INTERVIEWED ON BBC BY
ECONOMIST EDITOR BEEDHAM EVENING OF DECEMBER L.
FOLLOWING IS THE PORTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST, AS
PROVIDED TO US BY FCO:

2. MR. BEEDHAM: THE NEXT QUESTION I WANT TO ASK IS
ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST. THIS HAS BEEN VERY MUCH IN THE
NEWS IN THE PAST WEEK WITH PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT TO
JERUSALEM AND MR. BEGIN ABOUT TO COME HERE. ALMOST
EVERYBODY, OUTSIDE ISRAEL THAT IS, AND EVEN SOME IN-
SIDE ISRAEL AGREE THAT THE CENTRAL ISSUE IN A POSSIBLE
MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT IS THE DECISION BY THE
ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW SOME SORT OF PALESTINIAN
HOMELAND TO BE SET UP ON THE WEST BANK. THERE IS A
CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ABOUT WHAT SORT OF
HOME LAND THIS SHOULD BE. SOME ARGUE FOR AN ENTIRELY
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PAGE 02 LONDON 19737 022053Z

INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE, WHICH WOULD HAVE A
CERTAIN ADVANTAGE BECAUSE THIS WOULD HAVE MAXIMUM
SATISFACTION FOR THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, BUT
COULD HAVE CERTAIN DANGERS IF IT FAILED TO CONTROL ITS
EXTREMISTS WHO MIGHT THEN TRY TO POP OVER THE BORDER
INTO ISRAEL. OTHER PEOPLE ARGUE FOR A LESS THAN
WHOLLY INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN ENTITY OR HOME LAND

ATTACHED TO JORDAN OR OTHER ARAB STATES. PRESIDENT CARTER SAYS HIS PREFERENCE IS FOR THE LESS THAN WHOLLY INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN ENTITY AND FOR THE ATTACHMENT TO JORDAN. WHAT IS YOUR VIEW?

3. DR. OWEN: WE HAVE LEFT THAT OPTION OPEN, AND I THINK RIGHTLY BECAUSE THIS IS A CENTRAL PART OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. WE ARE COMMITTED TO NEEDING A HOME LAND FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, BUT NOT NECESSARILY A SOVEREIGN STATE, AND THAT IS OUR POSITION, AND WE WON'T TOUGHEN THAT UP. WE WILL SAY THIS SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION AND ONE OF THE THINGS ON THE AGENDA FOR GENEVA. WHAT IS NECESSARY, THERE IS NO DOUBT NOW, IS FOR ISRAEL TO GIVE SOME MESSAGE TO THE ARAB WORLD THAT THEY ARE SERIOUS ABOUT TERRITORY. IF THEY WERE TO SAY, FOR INSTANCE, WE HAVE NO TERRITORIAL DEMANDS ONLY SECURITY NEEDS, I BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE A VERY SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT. IT WOULD SHIFT AWAY FROM THE FEELING THAT THE ARAB WORLD HAD THAT THE ISRAELIS ACTUALLY WANT TERRITORY NOT JUST FOR SECURITY BUT ITS OWN SAKE. NOW I THINK THAT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL AS A BACKGROUND TO THE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS ON TERRITORY.

4. MR. BEEDHAM: IF THE ISRAELIS DO NOT MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION, AND IF PRESIDENT SADAT SEEMS TO BE TEMPTED
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 LONDON 19737 022053Z

BY THE POSSIBILITY OF A BILATERAL EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI PEACE, IS THAT ACCEPTABLE?

5. DR. OWEN: WELL, I PERSONALLY DO NOT SEE ANY ADVANTAGE AND SEE A LOT OF DISADVANTAGES IN THE ARAB WORLD UNITY, WHICH HAS BEEN VERY NOTABLE OVER THE LAST YEAR, SUDDENLY BEING DISSIPATED, AND I THINK THAT, THROUGH THEIR UNITY, THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO ENSURE GREATER MODERATION, AND I THINK TO SPLIT UP THE ARAB WORLD COULD WELL BE DAMAGING, ACTUALLY, TO PEACE IN THAT AREA. ON THE OTHER HAND NO PARTIES TO THE DISPUTE CAN BE GIVEN A VETO IF YOU ARE GOING TO GET INTO A DECENT NEGOTIATION. I THINK ONE OF THE ANXIETIES THAT PRESIDENT SADAT HAS HAD - AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, OR AT LEAST A LESS PUBLIC EXTENT - THE JORDANIANS, IS THAT SOME OF THE EXTREME DEMANDS WILL ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SQUARED AND WILL THEREFORE PUT THE ARAB WORLD INTO AN UNREAL NEGOTIATING POSITION. NOW THERE IS A HALFWAY HOUSE BETWEEN THEM, WHICH IS RETAINING ARAB UNITY' BUT NOT ALLOWING A MINORITY EXTREME POSITION TO HAZARD THEIR NEGOTIATING STANCE, AND THAT IS THE ONE I PREFER.

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